

OBITUARY

REV. BR. ANTONIO NAVARRO, S.J.

(1903-1987)

(With a plate)

The passing away of Rev. Br. A. Navarro S.J. on Monday, 5th October, 1987, soon after the demise of Dr. Salim Ali has come as a double loss to the world of ornithology in India. In his single-handed, life-long service to the cause of ornithology, his contributions are singularly outstanding.

Brother Antonio Navarro was born at Manresa, Spain, on 3rd April, 1903 and joined the Society of Jesus in 1919. He was sent to India in 1928 to be assigned, in 1931 to the newly established Department of Microbiology at St. Xavier's College in Bombay under Rev. Fr. Gonzalo Palarios, whom he accompanied to various north Indian hills in pursuit of Markhor and other long-horned goats and sheep. Some excellent heads were obtained. While in Bombay, Br. Navarro collected birds from the nearby hills and forests surrounding Khandala and the neighbouring countryside and later, after he was transferred to the St. Xavier's High School, Bombay, in 1941, worked the areas now known as the Borivli National Park and the Bird Sanctuary at Karnala. He pursued this hobby with great assiduity, devoting most of his spare hours to this study. The total number of birds collected by him is over 2000 and includes some washed up at Versova. His main purpose was to build a museum along the galleries of the school and, to this end, he studied the art of taxidermy. The unmounted specimens are stored in cabinets below the show-cases. This collection has not yet been carefully examined, but doubtless contains interesting specimens.

Apart from the Lesser (short-tailed) Shearwater and the Least Frigate Bird, which were obtained by him from local residents and have added to the list of our avifauna, the bulk of the specimens have yet to be compared with material from other parts of the country and no doubt include material which would add to our knowledge. It is indeed remarkable that he should have made such a representative collection. His work was a source of inspiration to a number of students of the school, including myself, and many of us helped in augmenting the museum collection with specimens of birds and mammals.

The following Indian records were collected by Br. Navarro —

- 1) Short-tailed Tropic Bird of which only three specimens have been collected so far. It was collected at Versova in 1965.
- 2) Least Frigate Bird — only two recorded in India and collected at Bandra in 1960.
- 3) A race of *Dumetia hyperythra* was named *navarroi* by H. Abdulali on the basis of several specimens from Khandala.
- 4) Ashy Minivet — collected in Khandala in 1975.
- 5) A half-grown Sun fish — the first specimen collected in India — near Bombay.

In addition to the collection of birds and mammals including a good collection of bats and a specimen of the rare rusty-spotted cat, the museum also has a noteworthy collection of about 200 varieties of eggs, some of them



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